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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 000126

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/GORDON AND KAIDANOW

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2020

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AR](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: FM EXPRESSES CONCERNS OVER ARMENIAN
MILITARY COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA

Classified By: Ambassador John Bass for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph six.

12. (C) FM Grigol Vashadze called the Ambassador in to underscore the GoG's deepening concern over Armenian military cooperation with Russia. He reiterated past notice of concern that the Armenians have requested more than 500 overflights for 2010, essentially a ten-fold increase over last year. Vashadze stressed that Georgia has not agreed to the entire volume of flights for 2010, but has agreed to continue overflights through the next month. Vashadze shared an internal Georgian Ministry of Defense report detailing the contents of one recent shipment as evidence of the GoG's concerns. The shipment showed a large quantity of large caliber ammunition (25mm and 30mm), apparently for aircraft/helicopters. In violation of the Georgia-Armenia MOU on overflight, both the shipper and recipient were listed as the Russian Federation. Vashadze expressed concern that the amount of arms flowing into Armenia could further destabilize the region, as well as be used by the Russians to squeeze Georgia from both sides.

13. (C) Vashadze stressed that Georgia had agreed to the overflights to further cooperation with Armenia. However, Georgia is concerned that Russia is using this agreement to introduce significant quantities of weapons into the region. Given this apparent reality, he said that Georgia would have to reconsider its permission for overflights. The FM said that between the weapons sold to Azerbaijan and now the weapons being shipped to Armenia, he fears that disagreements over Nagorno-Karabakh could quickly escalate. Georgia is worried that the Russians are using these overflights as a way to increase capabilities at Gyumri. This would allow the Russians to squeeze the Georgians from the North and South, if they so chose.

14. (C) Georgia, Vashadze said, is sending additional military staff to their embassy in Yerevan to help review cargo given the massive increase in overflights. The memo he passed to Ambassador provided a manifest of one shipment that included considerable amounts of high caliber ammunition for airplanes/helicopters. (Note: A translation of this memo was e-mailed to EUR-CARC and Embassy Yerevan. End note.) Vashadze questioned why the Armenians could possibly need this quantity given the small size of their air force. He said that the Georgian DATT found multiple inconsistencies in the cargo manifests, including who was the destined end user for the weapons. The Georgians believe, given that the Russian Federation was listed as both sender and recipient for the shipment, that it is actually intended to reinforce/resupply the Russian base at Gyumri.

15. (C) Vashadze also raised concerns about Azeri reaction to the Russian shipments into Armenia. He said that while the Georgians don't want to get in the middle, they are concerned about balancing the neighbors. He said that at some point

soon Azerbaijan will start to question the large number of overflights and wonder what is being shipped to Armenia.

¶6. (C) Action Request: Embassy Tbilisi requests an assessment, through appropriate channels, of what we think/know about the Armenians acquisition strategy and the extent to which these shipments are destined for them or others.

BASS